

Thirty Second SPREP Meeting of Officials

2-4 September 2025
Sheraton Aggie Greys Hotel & Bungalows
Apia, Samoa

“Sustaining our Pacific Environment in Harmony with our Cultures”

Agenda item 9.3.2: Pacific Marine Spill Contingency Plan (PACPLAN) Resilience Project

Purpose:

1. To inform and update Members on the PACPLAN Resilience Project and the Secretariat’s plans for continued support

Background:

Project Outcomes and Findings

2. A 3-year project funded by the Australian Government and completed in May, 2025, the PACPLAN Resilience Project was a strategic initiative designed to bolster the preparedness, response, and recovery capabilities of Pacific member states designated to Australia under PACPLAN. While the project successfully achieved significant deliverables across its three primary outcomes, it also revealed persistent systemic challenges related to political will, domestic capacity, and regional institutional coherence. The project’s findings underscore the necessity of moving beyond technical assessments to a sustained focus on legislative implementation and administrative ownership to ensure long-term regional resilience.
3. The first key outcome of the project was the enhancement of liability resilience through improved legal frameworks. The project successfully completed a legislative gap analysis and reviews of international conventions and domestic laws for five targeted countries: Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Kiribati, and Nauru. This work established a crucial foundation for future policy and legal reforms. However, a significant impediment to progress was identified and these challenge reveals that legal frameworks alone are insufficient without the corresponding political will and domestic capacity for execution.
4. Secondly, the project sought to improve regional response capability. This was addressed through multiple deliverables, including a Capability Gap Analysis (RETOS) and the provision of Incident Management Team (IMT) training. Staff in multiple countries were trained to various International Maritime Organisation (IMO) approved courses and the project facilitated the development of national contingency plans (NATPLANS). Despite these advancements, several critical challenges remain. The successful implementation of NATPLANS is contingent upon a Whole-of-Government commitment, which requires complex multi-agency involvement and agreement. Furthermore, the training delivery system remains ad hoc, lacking a standardized regional approach. This reliance on external agencies such as the United States Coast Guard, Maritime New Zealand and the IMO for support creates a fragmented system, compromising the regional consistency and transportability of skills necessary for a coordinated response.

5. Finally, the project aimed to strengthen SPREP's internal capacity to provide effective support to its members. The project funded a Marine Pollution Officer and leveraged international partnerships to support members. The PACPLAN Resilience Project was instrumental in identifying and addressing key deficiencies in oil spill preparedness across the Pacific. It provided a robust analytical framework and delivered tangible training and legal groundwork. However, the project's findings also illuminate the deep-seated, persistent challenges related to political inertia, domestic resource constraints, and the lack of standardized, institutionalized support mechanisms. True resilience for the region will require a concerted and sustained effort to transition from the project-based phase of analysis and advice to the active, long-term commitment of implementing and maintaining a fully integrated regional framework.

SPREP Follow Up

6. After considering the findings from its comprehensive review, SPREP has outlined its planned actions for the ongoing revision and strengthening of **PACPLAN**. To address these, a Concept of Operations has been developed, proposing pragmatic options with different levels of resource input, which are detailed in the table below. This strategic effort is designed to enhance SPREP's capacity to effectively manage and improve the PACPLAN initiative.

Key Actions	
2025: Governance & Mandate	Noumea Convention COP: Endorses reforms, reinforcing SPREP's role as the PACPLAN administrator.
2026: Foundation & Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expert Staffing: SPREP appoints a Marine Pollution Officer to lead the reform process. Steering Committee: A new committee is formed to guide PACPLAN's future priorities. Strategic Documents: Develop an annual Business Plan to coordinate activities and a Strategic Plan to define long-term priorities. Resource Expansion: Begin identifying and seeking funding for additional staff and regional technical services (e.g., satellite surveillance, forensic analysis).
2027-2029: Long-Term Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full PACPLAN Review: Plan and initiate a comprehensive review of the 2019 PACPLAN to address evolving risks and technologies, with endorsement by 2029.
Key Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Securing sustainable funding for both national and regional initiatives. Ensuring strong governance and strategic alignment across all member countries. Building regional response capacity through training, resources, and technical support.

7. The 18th Noumea COP will take the review and project findings into consideration and make its decisions to improve arrangements for the administration, support and delivery of PACPLAN. The decision of the Noumea COP on this matter will be conveyed to the SPREP meeting.

8. A core funded Marine Pollution Officer (MPO) is approved, to continue and build on the work of the Project. SPREP recognised that some of the issues identified by the Project can be addressed relatively quickly and at relatively low cost by the MPO. Governance changes, improvements to strategy, annual planning, and resources and activity coordination should be early low-hanging fruit. Remote technical advice to members, networking with international technical partners should continue the synergistic cooperation and collaboration established under the PACPLAN Resilience Project over the past three years.
9. Building and sustaining regional and national capacity, will likely require greater resource mobilisation, either through SPREP for regional application, or directly to members for their development. SPREP will work with members through the ongoing implementation and continual improvement of PACPLAN.

Recommendations:

10. The Meeting is invited to:

- 1) **Note** the outcomes and findings of the PACPLAN Resilience Project; and
 - 2) **Note** the Secretariat's plans to continue and build on the work of the PACPLAN Resilience Project guided by the decisions of the 18th Noumea COP
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